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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Monday, August 19, 1940.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CORN DISHES." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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One good reason to be glad you're living in the U.S.A. is green corn on the cob. The Indians did many a favor for the white man. Perhaps the kindest thing they did was to introduce him to corn. This 100-percent American food kept many of our forefathers from dying of starvation their first winter here and has been a favorite food of their descendants ever since. So these summer days when you sink your teeth into hot tender sweet corn, sprinkled with salt and dripping with butter, give thanks to the Indians for this great national food treat.

Also give thanks to the American climate where corn grows to perfection. Our hot summer weather sends the cornstalks shooting high, and fills the kernels with sweet milky juice.

Both the way corn grows, and the way you cook and serve it, are important if corn-on-the-cob is to be a real treat. And that reminds me of a story reported by an American who lived in England for some years. Each summer in England this American lady was homesick for corn on the cob. So one of her English friends decided to give her a nice surprise. Corn doesn't grow very well in the cool, moist climate of the British Isles, but with great effort the English friend managed to raise some. Then he invited the American lady to dinner. Dinner was late -- an hour late, two hours late. Finally dinner was served. But when the corn appeared it was so dark and shriveled and soggy the American lady hardly recognized it. The English friend apologized. He said his cook had boiled the corn 4 hours, and still the cobs wouldn't get tender.

Well, most Americans know better than to cook corn 4 hours. But a good many still cook it too much. You'd think after 300 years' experience with this 100-per-cent American food everyone would know that 5 minutes in the kettle is all young, tender, green corn needs. You may have to give market corn a few minutes longer — maybe as much as 10 minutes. But if corn isn't tender after 10 minutes of gentle boiling or simmering, it is too old for eating on the cob. Better cut it off and use it for succotash, or fritters, or some other combination dish.

The 3 important points for perfect corn on the cob are: first, have it fresh from the garden; second, cook it gently just a few minutes; third, eat it immediately. Green corn is one vegetable that just won't wait and still be good. Corn gets soggy if it soaks in the kettle, or waits in the warming oven while you finish up the rest of the dinner and round up the family.

You can cook corn in milk as well as in water. Simmering in milk helps it hold both its color and flavor. Some people like to add a little sugar to the kettle to make corn taste extra sweet.

Now what to do with the corn that's left-over after dinner, or the corn that's a little too old for eating from the cob? You can use it in many a fine dish. To return to the Indians, let's mention succotash first, the mixture of corn and beans the Indians taught our foremothers to make. You can make delicious succotash by cutting corn from the cob after it is cooked, adding cooked young green lima beans, a little milk, butter, salt and pepper, and perhaps a little chopped cooked bacon for extra flavor. Or you can cut the raw corn off the cob, and cook it in milk with the young lima beans.

You can also combine corn with snap beans or even cooked dried beans.

Succotash is just a start on corn combinations. Corn goes well with tomatoes; with chopped green pepper; with chopped pimiento; with chopped onion; and with cheese. A combination of cooked corn, stewed tomatoes, and melted cheese on toast makes a good, quick dish for lunch or Sunday night supper.

Then, there's the old favorite -- corn fritters.

For corn fritters you make a batter by first mixing one and three-fourths cup of flour with 2 teaspoons of baking powder and 1 teaspoon of salt; then adding one cup of milk. Then add a slightly beaten egg and one cup of cooked corn. Stir the ingredients gradually together, but don't beat. Add one tablespoon of melted fat.

You can fry the fritter batter either in deep fat in a kettle, or in shallow fat in the frying pan. Drop the batter by spoonfuls into the hot fat. Fry rather slowly because the fritters need time to cook to the center before the outside becomes too brown. Drain the fritters on absorbent paper and serve hot.

(By the way, when the green corn season is over, you can still have corn fritters. This recipe holds good for canned corn or dried corn, only then you will use the liquid from the canned or cooked dried corn in place of the milk.)

Another excellent corn dish is corn pudding. It's a main dish, not a dessert, in spite of the name. Corn pudding is an unsweetened custard made, as a rule, with cooked corn. Some day when you want a change from meat, try corn pudding.

And beside these corn dishes are hundreds of others originated by good American cooks down through the years--corn soup, corn chowder, corn with shrimp as they fix it in the South, corn with clams as they fix it in New England, scalloped corn as they make it in the Middle West, and--but there. All this adds up to just one suggestion: good Americans will make the most of this good American food during this season and all the rest of the year.

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